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A THIRTEENTH CENTURY
MARBLE RELIEF FROM POBLET

THE monastery of Poblet was the home of many examples of early Spanish art which are now exhibited in foreign museums; for the rioters who plundered and partly demolished the ancient buildings in 1822-1835 carried away numberless statues and decorative fragments from altars and tombs. Some of these objects early found their way into the hands of traveling artists, who used them as studio "effects" in days when every studio was more or less a bric-à-brac shop; others have remained hidden away in the neighborhood, and have been extracted year by year by visiting collectors, sometimes from the most unlikely places — garrets, cellars, garden rockeries, fountains, and stables. Even a few years ago an interesting marble relief was discovered, as I myself can bear witness, in a poultry stall in the street market of the neighboring Tarragona. Important finds, however, have become rare; noteworthy, therefore, is the Museum's acquisition of a small bas-relief (18 in. x 22½ in.) of a chevalier, lately unearthed, which formed part of one of the earliest monuments of the ancient church. It is probably from the side or end of a tomb, and from its excellent workmanship the object was evidently prepared in memory of a personage of the highest rank. This we may fairly conclude was the celebrated conquistador, Jaime I; for a part of a border of a monument bearing the kingly blazon of Aragon was discovered at the same time, a fragment which formed a cornice for the present relief. Certainly the object dates from the period of Don Jaime, who died in 1276. Other parts of his tomb have been preserved and correspond in material and workmanship to the present sculpture. The mummy of the king, it may be noted, is no longer at Poblet; it was transferred about 1836 to the choir of the Cathedral of Tarragona where a new monument has been erected.

Aside from the interest of provenance, the present relief is worthy of careful study from two viewpoints: first as an *objet d'art* and second as a rare document

for the study of early military equipment. In the first regard, one recalls that the plastic art had reached an extraordinary degree of development in Spain during the thirteenth century, and it is not difficult to decide that the present work shows the marks of its place of origin and of the period. The horse bears its knight proudly, its legs, fore and hind, separated widely, the posture of a trained horse *en grande tenue*. It seems huge in size, for the head is small, the neck high and straight, quite giraffine, and there is a mystical look about it which recalls to us the apocalyptic beasts dear to the artists of those days. Over the horse's head and shoulders passes a tightly fitted housing which falls in narrow rounding folds about the neck, and extends thence from the chest to the ground, its lower margins rolling outward in slightly radiate folds. The housing appears at the crupper also, and, after the mode of the thirteenth century, hangs nearly to the hoofs. The chevalier himself is executed in a masterly way. He sits lightly balanced, high in his armored saddle, with the air of one who has been reared on horseback; one feels that his knees grasp the saddle and that his feet swing freely in the stirrup. And that his seat is good is shown in the swing of his shoulders and in the inward curve of his backbone above the hips. Even the set of his head indicates the horseman at his ease. As he turns to face the observer, he extends his arms in gesture of salute. The proportions of the figures are clearly naïve, the horse is a monster and the man is a dwarf in arm and leg, but these are defects which are soon forgotten. One notes rather the poise and energy of the knight and his destrier, a composition of rare vitality. Its sculptor had also an admirable mastery of his material. He was sure of his lines, whether chiseling in boldest relief, or modeling delicate draperies, showing in these matters the same traits as the Greek artists. The entire marble appears to have been brightly polychromed, judging from the present traces of color; the horse's housings were striped vertically in red (the color of Aragon), and their linings were green.

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MARBLE RELIEF
SPANISH, THIRTEENTH CENTURY

From the viewpoint of the study of ancient armor, the present sculpture is of considerable value. It supplements, in the round, the drawings of the manuscript *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, of Alphonso the Wise, which is preserved to-day in the Escorial. It shows similar horse trappings, including a curious plate, probably of cuir-bouilli, which protected the flank and rump. The rein was singularly light, probably of horsehair, which was flung over the high cantle of the saddle; it was for curb only, and the branch of the bit, to which it was attached, extended far down at the side, the ring marking its end appearing against the horse's neck. 'Twas a merciless curb, and speaks clearly of a time when a rider expected instant obedience; he had other things to do than struggle with his horse; his hands must be largely free for the use of buckler and sword. In the knight's equipment one notes the early bassinet which extends low at the back of the head, comes to a sub-acute point, and is strengthened by strips of metal, probably of steel gilded, which covered the sutures of the triangular plates which make up the shell, or timbre, of the casque of this period. The knight is fully clad in banded mail, which is of links of the largest size, and his heavy shirt or hauberk extends down the thighs half-way to the knees. He is wearing a surcoat, close-fitting, but slashed at the skirts; it is especially interesting, as the modeling clearly shows, that a heavily padded garment was present underneath the mail. The legs were encased in a pantaloon of chain mail which terminated in mail sollerets, as one sometimes sees in early brasses. The mail of the hand was not continued over the palm: here a separate pad is shown which was probably of leather. A narrow ceinture suspends the long straps of the sword hanger, which is articulated to the scabbard by means of large rings. The sword hilt has the usual short guard and straight quillons, and the pommel is unusual in developing the form of a fleur-de-lis. The buckler, borne on the knight's extended arm, is typically Spanish; its rim is distinct and was probably of metal and its central portion was of wood, or possi-

bly of boiled leather; the straps for the hand and arm were broad and strong, and their ends slightly ornamented where they were fastened to the shield.

B. D.

CLASSICAL DEPARTMENT

ACCESSIONS OF 1912

SCULPTURES, TERRACOTTAS, AND MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS

SCULPTURES

THE two most important sculptures purchased in 1912 — the Roman portrait head in red porphyry and the archaistic head of Athena — have already been published in a previous number of the BULLETIN. There remain to be described eight¹ other pieces.

Of these the most important is an Athenian gravestone in the form of a large vase (fig. 1). Our collection of Greek sculptures comprises a number of gravestones of various types — the simple slab, decorated with a relief or painting and surmounted by a decorated finial; the more monumental type in which the sculptured slab is recessed between two pilasters in the form of a shrine; and the slab without relief decoration, ending above in an akroterion. This is our first example of another form which became very common during the fourth century B. C., in which the monument has assumed the shape of a vase and has a relief decoration on its principal field. Its origin is clearly derived from the custom of placing terracotta vases on the tombs as offerings to the dead, as is shown by the fact that the two shapes which occur in marble, the lekythos or oil-jug and the loutrophoros or marriage-vase, are also the two which were commonly used for the dedications in terracotta. Our example has the shape of a lekythos and is decorated with a charming scene in relief, representing a man and a woman clasping hands, and a seated woman holding out a bird to a little girl. We may

¹A ninth piece has not yet been properly set up and will, therefore, be reserved for future treatment.